

ResearchGate GmbH

To:  
Dr Ijad Madisch, CEO  
Horst Fickenscher, CTO

And to:  
Jay Monahan, General Counsel

Invalidenstrasse 115  
Berlin, Germany

Basel, 15 September 2017

Dear Sirs/Mesdames

**RE: STM proposal – RG platform to become consistent with usage  
and access rights for article sharing**

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I am instructed by my Client, the International Association of Scientific Technical and Medical Publishers (STM), to write to you regarding the content, activities and conduct related to the platform service ResearchGate located at the domain [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net) and other associated sites (“RG” or “RG’s site”).

STM - the voice of scholarly publishing - is an international association of over 140 scientific, technical, medical and scholarly publishers of all sizes. Over the past few weeks, STM has canvassed among its membership about the level of commitment to arrive at a sustainable and legally compliant scientific communications ecosystem. I am advised that this commitment remains very high. This is due to a shared desire to find a workable solution that ensures that scientific content, including content on RG’s site, respects usage and access rights for all and that

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researchers are able to track usage of their research across multiple platforms.

STM recognises the important role that scientific content plays also in your business model and would like to provide a solution that gives you a sustainable way to grow and to continue the important role you play in the research ecosystem.

As you know, STM has always advocated that adherence to “STM’s Voluntary Principles on Article Sharing” would constitute the clearest and simplest of approaches to join the ecosystem of research communications consistent with usage and access rights. Moreover and beyond, STM’s members now have devised a solution for you that would enable ResearchGate to operate in a way that would be consistent with these principles. STM extends this offer to you as follows:-

- RG’s users could continue “claiming”, i.e. agreeing to make public or uploading documents in the way they may have become accustomed to with RG’s site. An automated system, utilizing existing technologies and ready to be implemented by STM members, would indicate if the version of the article could be shared publicly or privately. If publicly, then the content could be posted widely. If privately, then the article would remain available only to the co-authors or other private research groups consistent with the STM Voluntary Principles. In addition, a message could be sent to the author showing how to obtain rights to post the article more widely. This system could be implemented within 30-60 days and could then handle this “processing” well within 24 hours. Open Access articles, particularly those under a CC-BY licence, can of course be shared in many different ways and hence would not fall under this system.
- Researchgate and STM could work together to improve user communication around posting policies which would include references to the informational STM-sponsored site [www.howcanishareit.com](http://www.howcanishareit.com) and would generally note that for non-OA content, most journals do not permit the public posting of the final version of a journal article.
- For the large number of articles (final versions/proofs) that are currently hosted on RG’s site without authorization or permission and which are being made available publicly, STM is able to offer a two-pronged solution:
  - For content posted before September 2016, STM members would grant permission for you to keep such material available until the end of June 2018, to enable the parties to review and assess whether such content could remain publicly available and under what terms; and
  - For content posted on or after September 2016, but before the new system above is implemented, STM and RG would work together to assess the number of final versions of articles posted without authorization or permission. RG and STM would be using methods that STM and its members have been reviewing and testing and

which STM believe can identify and remove such content easily and accurately. STM believe both parties can implement this before the end of this year.

- Finally, STM members expect as part of this arrangement another important commitment from you and this relates to preserving the academic record: Specifically, RG would end its extraction of content from hosted articles and the modification of any hosted content, including any and all metadata. It would also mean an end to Researchgate's own copying and downloading of published journal article content and the creation of internal databases of articles.

STM firmly believe that this offer would enable you to operate RG's site in a sustainable way, consistent with well-established usage and access rights. STM also believes that acceding to this offer would provide a platform such as yours with additional potential for further collaborations that STM members may seek directly with you.

On behalf of STM, I urge you therefore to consider this proposal. If you fail to accede to this proposal by 22 September 2017, then STM will be leaving the path open for its individual members to follow up with you separately, whether individually or in groups sharing a similar interest and approach, as they may see fit.

I look forward to hearing from you and, as is customary, reserve all of STM's and its members rights.

Yours faithfully



Carlo Scollo Lavizzari